DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 099 772 CS 001 457

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TITLE Alternatives for College-School District Cooperation in Teacher Training.
PUB DATE Nov 74
NOTE 9p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the College Reading Association (18th, Bethesda, Maryland, October 31-November 2, 1974)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.75 HC-$1.50 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS Elementary Education; Elementary School Teachers; *Field Experience Programs; *Performance Based Teacher Education; *Teacher Education; Teaching Experience
IDENTIFIERS Articulated Campus Field Program; Individualized Teacher Preparation Program

ABSTRACT

This article discusses alternative models for the involvement of school districts in the training of teachers. Two approaches for the training of prospective teachers are discussed. The first is the Individualized Teacher Preparation Program (ITP). The components of ITP include seminars organized to meet the needs or interests of students in certain areas, competencies demonstrated and mastered in a public school situation, and workshops which the college offers to participating teachers. The second approach for elementary teacher preparation is the Articulated Campus/Field Program (ACF). The ACF includes a block of methods courses for language arts, social studies, science, and math; school experience in conjunction with campus instruction; graduate courses for participating teachers; and courses which consider the particular problems and needs of students and faculty who are working together in the program. (WR)

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ED 099772

Alternatives for College-School District Cooperation in Teacher Training

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Cooperation between colleges and school districts in training teachers is not new. Student teaching has been an integral part of teacher preparation for years. In the traditional model, this experience lasts from six to fifteen weeks and follows three semesters of discrete courses in areas such as educational psychology, philosophy of education, and various methods courses.

Changes from this traditional model invariably involve greater school participation by teacher trainees. A competency-based teacher education program for the preparation of elementary school teachers has recently been instituted at the State University College of New York at Brockport. Under the umbrella of a single set of competencies, two delivery systems offer optional approaches to prospective teachers.

The first of these approaches is known as the Individualized Teacher Preparation Program (ITP). It represents a commitment to personalized teacher education. Students who feel themselves capable of self-direction are encouraged to affiliate with this program. A strong advisor-advisee relationship exists in which both parties work together to develop a personalized program of study.

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CS 001 457

Paper presented at the 18th Annual Meeting of the College Reading Assoc., Bethesda, Md., Oct 31 - Nov 2, 1974.

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Formal classes as such do not exist. Rather, seminars are organized when a group of students indicate a need or interest in a certain area.

Consistent with good practice in a competency-based program, students know from the start just what the competencies are which they are expected to master. Evidence of competency can be demonstrated on three levels. On the first level, which deals essentially with acquisition of knowledge, paper and pencil tests measure accomplishment.

The majority of the competencies, however, must be mastered and demonstrated in a public school situation. On the second level, this involves work with individuals or small groups or takes the form of simulation. Such approaches require more cooperation between college and school district. From the first semester of the 3-4 semester elementary sequence, students find themselves involved in public school classrooms. This participation is more than an observation or orientation. Under the guidance of their faculty advisors, students identify those competencies which they feel ready to develop, and arrangements are made with cooperating classroom teachers so that these early competencies can be achieved.

There is no required sequence in which the competencies must be completed. However, certain factors do influence the

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order in which a student may pursue them. The school with which a student is affiliated may be planning a particular series of events to celebrate Washington's Birthday in 1976. This might be the logical time for that student to fulfill his requirements in the area of social studies methods. On the other hand, the student may be anxious to administer and interpret an informal reading inventory but could be counseled by his college advisor or cooperating teacher to wait until he has learned some basic information about the reading process.

Over several semesters of increasing participation and responsibility in elementary classrooms, the student reaches the point where he can demonstrate competencies at the third level. This is closest to the traditional student-teaching experience. Student performance now involves a whole class or groups within that class over a continuing period of time up to a full semester.

In an arrangement like this, the role of the cooperating public school teacher is different from that of the traditional master teacher who sees college students only during their final undergraduate semester. The teacher must be ready to work with many students whose experiences range widely from one who is stepping into an elementary classroom for the first time since he left sixth grade himself to one

who is in the final stages of teacher preparation and is about to receive certification.

Given these added responsibilities for the classroom teacher, how can the college reciprocate in such a cooperative program? One type of assistance takes the form of workshops which the college staff offers to participating teachers. These workshops deal with both the process of CBTE programs and the content of particular competency areas. In addition, every member of the college staff works in the field with students and teachers. There is no dichotomy between an on-campus teaching faculty and an off-campus supervising faculty. The increased frequency of informal contacts in the schools among all teachers, students, and professors is considered beneficial to everyone.

The second delivery system in elementary teacher preparation at State University College at Brockport is the Articulated Campus/Field Program (ACF). While working from the same set of competencies as ITP, the ACF program bears a closer resemblance to a traditional approach in that instruction is given through separate three-credit-hour courses. Yet here too, one can see a close cooperation between college and school district.

An exception to the three-credit-hour courses is the set of methods courses for language arts, social studies, science, and math. Each of these carry one and one half hours

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credit, a total of six hours. This set is known as "The Block" and is scheduled so that all enrolled students will meet on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings from nine o'clock until noon. The reason for this scheduling is to provide an extended period of time for students to have an experience within the public schools.

The school experience is articulated with the campus instruction. During the first three weeks, students are on campus being introduced to fundamental methods of teaching in the four areas. Following this, students move into the field where they spend two weeks of participation in elementary schools. Many of the students begin as observers and soon advance to work with individual children. Students with greater experiences find themselves helping more children during this participation period. Field supervision is provided by instructors from "The Block."

Upon return to the campus, students have a more realistic understanding of the content to which they had been exposed earlier in the semester. They come back from the schools with specific questions and areas of interest which can be pursued during the next four weeks on campus. During this time, they also prepare for particular teaching situations to which they will shortly return. The second "tour" in the field is for an extended period of five weeks.

At this stage, students are ready to take on greater responsibilities and to work with larger groups of children. The conclusion of the semester finds students returning to the college for a one week period of consolidation, drawing together both their campus and their field experiences.

"The Block" is usually taken in the junior year and provides a "phasing in" to the elementary school. Students then have the opportunity for a fuller immersion in the schools with a standard student teaching semester which occurs in their senior year.

As a part of this cooperative program, the college offers graduate courses to teachers in the participating districts. Many of the courses take place in the elementary schools which serve as centers for student teaching. Those teachers who work with student teachers receive a tuition waiver of three semester hours for each semester of participation.

A wide range of courses is offered in the schools, and some have a particular relationship to the cooperative teacher training venture. One of these is entitled Seminar in Roles and Competencies. The course considers the particular problems and needs of students and faculty at all levels who are working together in a program such as this one.

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The course called Special Problems in Reading is designed to meet special requirements in the teaching of reading as identified by a specific school district. Thus the content varies from semester to semester and is cooperatively determined by the district's reading coordinator and the college professor.

In addition to the two delivery systems just described, there is an additional element of college/school district cooperation which is not required in either program but is elected by many students in both programs. It is known as the Brockport Cooperative Educational Project (BCEP). Students can earn three to six hours of undergraduate credits by tutoring from three to six hours in the schools. Faculty advisors representing many academic disciplines and several areas of educational studies provide guidance to the student tutors. For some, this experience comes before formal course work in education and serves as an introduction to teaching. Some freshmen and sophomores who hadn't considered teaching as a career, find that their BCEP tutoring leads them to enroll in the teacher certification program. For other students, it provides increased experiences in the schools to supplement their planned programs.

Across the country, many colleges are moving toward programs which incorporate greater cooperation with school

districts. It is hoped that these programs will increase the quality of teacher preparation. However, there are still many unanswered questions of both a practical and a theoretical nature which must be considered. Among these are the following.

1. Given greater involvement of teacher trainees in the public school, how can it be assured that quality of demonstration and supervision will be maintained?
2. Student teaching has always required a lower student-faculty ratio. In the face of rising costs and shrinking budgets in higher education, will it be possible to expand programs which require this lower student-faculty ratio?
3. Is there an optimal level of pre-service participation in the public schools?

Attention to questions such as these should help cooperative teacher preparation programs reach their full potential.